



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Division of Registration  
Leverett Saltonstall Building, Government Center  
100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA 02202

Board of Registration in Nursing  
(617) 727-9961

**BOARD OF REGISTRATION IN NURSING**

**TO:** Advanced Practice Nurses  
**FROM:** Board of Registration in Nursing  
**RE:** Prescriptive Authority

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1. The Board of Nursing regulations related to advanced practice nursing, including prescriptive practice, are available from the State House Bookstore, at (617) 727-2834, for a nominal fee. Ask for 244 CMR, sections 1.00 - 8.00. The regulations are also available on the Internet, at: <http://www.state.ma.us/reg/rn.htm>. The relevant regulations are in section 4.00.

2. **All** advanced practice nurses who are seeking prescriptive authority in Massachusetts must register with the D.P.H. To obtain an application for a Controlled Substance Registration Number, which is required for prescribing drugs in schedule VI, the Department of Public Health, at (617) 983-6700, or write:

Controlled Substances Registration  
Division of Food and Drugs  
305 South Street  
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

3. If your practice will include prescribing controlled substances in Schedules II - V, call (617) 557-2200 to obtain an application for a DEA number. To be eligible for a DEA number you must have a Controlled Substance Registration Number (or have an application pending for same), from the MA Department Public Health.

It is not legal to prescribe or write orders for any prescription drug or controlled substance until the appropriate state and federal registration numbers are issued.

#### **4. BOARD OF NURSING AUTHORIZATION TO PRACTICE AS AN ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSE**

Nurses seeking registration to prescribe from the Department of Public Health will be required to provide evidence of Board of Nursing authorization to practice as an advanced practice nurse; that is, a copy of a current Massachusetts RN license, with the appropriate advanced practice designation, or a current Board of Registration in Nursing certificate of authorization to practice as an advanced practice nurse.

Applications for authorization are available from the Board of Nursing at (617) 727-9961.

#### **5. PHARMACOLOGY EDUCATION**

Nurses applying for registration to prescribe from the Department of Public Health will be required to verify on their application, under pains and penalties of perjury, that they meet the requirements of the Board of Registration in Nursing, as provided for in M.G.L. c. 112, the Nurse Practice Act, and 244 CMR 4.00, the Board of Nursing Regulations Governing The Practice of Nursing in the Expanded Role.

The requirements include 24 contact hours in pharmacotherapeutics. These contact hours must have been acquired since completion of the nurse's basic, generic nursing education program.

Pharmacology content within the expanded role program may qualify to fulfill this requirement, as may pharmacology content covered within continuing education programs for specific clinical issues.

The Board regulations do not require a specific, discrete pharmacology course. Content related to pharmacology is part of many continuing education programs. This type of integrated pharmacological content is acceptable to the Board. It is not necessary to submit documentation of a pharmacology course, or of specific course content, with your application for a DPH registration number. Your signature on the DPH application is verification of your compliance with the Board of Nursing regulation.

The Board will conduct random audits of compliance with this requirement.

#### **6. SUPERVISING PHYSICIAN**

It is important to note that the supervising physician is the physician with whom the nurse has developed and signed prescribing guidelines. This is the definition in Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 112, section 80B.

All of the Board regulations which refer to a supervising physician refer to the physician with whom the nurse has developed and signed guidelines for **prescribing** practice.

There are other criteria for the supervising physician defined in the regulations. It is important that you be familiar with them.

The Board of Medicine has promulgated regulations which further describe the role and responsibilities of the supervising physician. These regulation, at 243 CMR, section 2.08, are available from the State House Book Store at (617) 727-2834, for a nominal fee.

## **7. PRESCRIBING GUIDELINES**

The supervising physician must review the nurse's prescribing practice at least every three months. Guidelines should specify how this will be accomplished; for example, a nurse and supervising physician may decide to review the patient record more frequently for patients with a specific diagnosis.

Examples of other review methods include a review of the most frequently prescribed drugs, or a review of particular categories of drugs prescribed.

The initial prescription of Schedule II drugs must be reviewed within 96 hours. The manner in which this will be done, i.e., by telephone communication, by chart review, or by other means, needs to be described in the guidelines; in addition, guidelines should specify how the review will be documented.

Prescribing guidelines must also include how frequently the nurse and supervising physician will review *initial* prescriptions issued by the nurse, how this will be done, and how it will be documented.

If the nurse's practice includes prescribing controlled substances from Schedule II, and/or intravenous therapies, the guidelines must include protocols for these activities.

The Board regulations include other specific requirements for advanced practice nurse guidelines. It is important that advanced practice nurses know the legal and regulatory requirements for practice in Massachusetts.